

have been treating such women with implants of oestrogen and testosterone and lately adding "D.O.C.A." (deoxycortone acetate). I have reported the results in a paper.² There is still some reluctance to treat climacteric women with oestrogen, primarily for two reasons: (1) It may lead to prolonged uterine bleeding; (2) oestrogen might be carcinogenic. During the first three years of my treatment I encountered several cases of prolonged withdrawal bleedings because the dosage of oestrogen was too high. Later, since the ratio of oestrogen to testosterone has been reduced to 1:5 or even 1:10 and vaginal cytology used to determine the oestrogen deficiency, I have observed only a very few cases of slight bleeding, all of which stopped without any further treatment. If bleeding lasted too long, a dilatation and curettage was done to exclude any malignant condition.

As to the possibility of the carcinogenic effect of oestrogens this theory is not generally accepted as a fact. It was based on experiments with lower animals, but clinical observations so far have failed to substantiate this theory.³⁻⁵ Larsen⁶ tried to clarify the confusion besetting this problem, and came to the conclusion that no correlation whatsoever exists between oestrogen and cancer, and he dismisses the theory as "mythical." Among the 650 cases I have treated with implants, I have not seen a single case of cancer which could have been provoked by oestrogen treatment.—I am, etc.,

E. SCHLEYER-SAUNDERS.

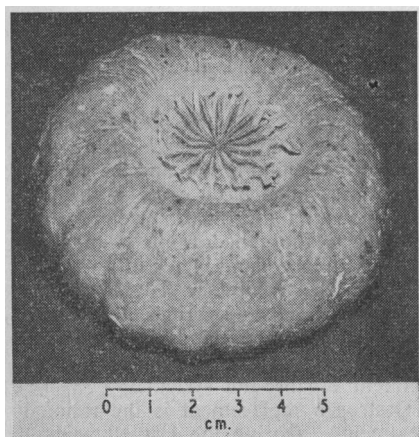
London W.1.

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- ⁶ Larsen, J. A., *Obstet. and Gynec.*, 1954, 3, 551.

A Taste of Poppy

SIR,—I was fascinated by the medical memorandum of Dr. M. M. Glatt and Dr. M. M. Hossain (July 13, p. 102). Some two years ago (from memory) I described a similar case at a meeting of one of our local medical societies, and



I believe it was referred to in a paper on addiction by Harrington.¹

I was intrigued to know how my patient managed to get hold of 10 poppy heads daily. An Indian houseman suggested they were sent by relatives in food parcels, but the patient insisted he got them from the chemist. So, suitably disguised, I made my way to the nearest pharmacy, where I was offered without hesitation a variety of poppy heads from which I chose the majestic specimen shown in the accompanying photograph. It cost me 1s. 3d. Taking into account the change in the value of money since 1821 I might be forgiven for whispering "happiness might now be bought for a penny." On disclosing my identity I learnt from the chemist that there was a steady demand from the local Indian population. In fact, when he informed the police that a customer had asked for £3 worth of poppy heads they replied that they were well aware of the habit. Apparently a favourite pastime is to hold parties at which a concoction of poppy heads, aspirin, and whisky is drunk.

Henry² quotes a range of 0.18–0.9% anhydrous morphine in samples of poppy heads from seven different countries. Other preparations which contain small quantities of morphine are also freely available, and there is evidence that "chlorodyne," for example, may lead to addiction.⁴ Surely their sale to members of the public should be prohibited.—I am, etc.,

Birmingham, 18.

A. PATON.

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- ² De Quincey, T., *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, London Magazine, 1821.
- ³ Henry, T. A., *The Plant Alkaloids*, 1949, 4th ed. Churchill, London.
- ⁴ Conlon, M. F., *Brit. med. J.*, in press.

Medical and Scientific Literature for Cuba

SIR,—There is an urgent need to fill a serious gap in the supply of scientific and medical literature, especially periodicals, to universities and scientific institutes in Cuba.

Political events during the last 12 to 18 months have resulted in an acute shortage of foreign currency. Because of this it has been impossible to purchase all the necessary scientific books and journals, especially from those countries where trade with Cuba has suffered. This, of course, particularly concerns English-language periodicals. The position is likely to deteriorate in the future unless the political situation improves.

The undersigned have all visited Cuba at one time or another during the last eight months, and we have seen for ourselves the many problems facing students, teachers, and research workers in that country, as well as the determined efforts they are making to develop their health services and increase the number of doctors.

Assistance in the supply of much-needed scientific literature is something

we feel many would be able and willing to give, and we are therefore making a wide appeal for offers of the following:

1. Sets of established periodicals (over periods covering the last two years if possible, and with some assurance of continuance for the next five years).

2. Recognized modern textbooks in all medical and scientific subjects. Financial help to purchase specific items already listed as particularly urgently required would also, of course, be especially welcome.

There is no doubt that any such gesture would be deeply appreciated by members of the scientific, medical, and dental professions in Cuba, not only as direct help in a difficult situation, but as a measure of the friendly co-operation with this country which so many of them are anxious to see develop.

Details of specific offers can be sent to one of us (M.R.P., "South Heath," East Heath Road, London, N.W.3), and arrangements will then be made for shipping acceptable items to Cuba as soon as possible.—We are, etc.,

MARY BARBER.

HUGH C. FAULKNER.

DAVID MORRIS.

M. R. POLLOCK.

Cruelty to Animals Act, 1876

SIR,—The Home Secretary has recently appointed a Departmental Committee under my chairmanship to inquire into the working of the Cruelty to Animals Act, 1876, which regulates experiments on living vertebrate animals. The committee's terms of reference are: "To consider the present control over experiments on living animals and to consider whether, and if so what, changes are desirable in the law or its administration."

The committee hopes to receive evidence covering the administration of the Act and its application to the scope and nature of current and prospective experimental work in animals. It hopes also to examine the question of the supply of animals for experimental purposes. If any person has information or comment that will help the committee in studying these matters, I should be grateful if he will send it in writing to the Secretary, Mr. P. Beedle, at the Home Office, Whitehall, London S.W.1. The committee, which intends to sit in private, will decide in the light of written evidence received how far it desires to take oral evidence.

It may save misunderstanding if I add that it is no part of the committee's task to consider the questions—previously reviewed by two Royal Commissions—whether experiments on animals are justified or have had any useful results.—I am, etc.,

SYDNEY LITTLEWOOD.

Committee on Experiments
on Animals,
Home Office,
London S.W.1.